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Serial No. 09/938,485

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Docket No. 1484.1007

REMARKS

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the foregoing, claims 1-8, 10-18, 20-27, 29-37, 39-46 and 48-56 have been amended. No new matter has been submitted.

Accordingly, reconsideration of the allowability of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-8, 10-18, 20-27, 29-37, 39-46 and 48-56 are pending and under consideration.

REJECTION UNDER 35 USC 103

Claims 1-8, 10-18, 20-27, 29-37, 39-46 and 48-56 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being obvious over Moody et al., US Patent No. 5,890,177, In view of a portion of a Microsoft publication "Getting Results with Microsoft Office 97" (hereinafter "Office 97"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

In view of the above, independent claims have been amended to clarify the claimed invention. For example, independent claim 1 now sets forth:

"A related documents processing device, associating relevance among at least separately created documents, comprising:

a detector detecting relevance among the separately created documents; and
a locator locating a timewise latest document related to a document selected based on detected relevance information,

wherein the documents are electronic mail (emails), and the relevance information detected by the detector includes an email exchange history of a branching of separate emails from a first email, with the branching of emails including at least two distinct time-wise non-sequential emails branching from the first email on a same branch of the branching of emails and/or at least two distinct time-wise sequential emails branching from the first email on different branches of the branching of emails."

Here, independent claims have been amended to emphasize that the claimed documents are separately created documents, compared to a modification of a previous document, such as a forwarding of an original Word document for revisions by a number of reviewers who may return the same modified Word document to an original sender or another reviewer for further modification.

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In addition, the claimed relevance information is claimed as including "an email exchange history of a branching of separate emails from a first email, with the branching of emails including at least two distinct time-wise non-sequential emails branching from the first email on a same branch of the branching of emails and/or at least two distinct time-wise sequential emails branching from the first email on different branches of the branching of emails."

Here, a branching aspect from dependent claims has been incorporated into independent claims, including at least a clarification of what emails will at least be included in this branching, by referencing at least timewise non-sequential distinct emails from a same branch and timewise sequential emails from different branches.

Thus, applicants have further clarified the independent claims through an additional emphasis on emails and the distinctiveness of the emails.

The outstanding Office Action appears to set forth a rejection rationale based on a modification of Moody et al., which appears to include a displaying of different user modifications of the same original word processing document, to be applied to emails. The Office Action thus further uses Office 97 to support a rationale that a "document" in Moody et al. may also be an email.

Thus, by applying such an interpretation of a "document" to the system of Moody et al., the Office Action would appear to be setting forth a rationale that the invention of Moody et al. could be applied to emails based on a discussion in Office 97 of Word sending emails.

However, conversely to this modification Moody et al., or the application of an email "document" definition/interpretation from Office 97, applicants respectfully submit that neither Moody et al. nor Office 97 disclose or suggest the above-mentioned distinctness between documents, i.e., the separately created aspect of the documents, and the potential sequential and/or non-sequential nature of the claimed branching included in the relevance information.

For example, Moody et al. would appear to focus on modifications to a single document, and the sole relevance of modifications just to that singularly created document. As the document is modified, or further modified through further reviews, the tracking of such changes in Moody et al. is always related to that same singularly created document.

Conversely, independent claims sets forth that the email documents are separately created documents.

Further, there is no discussion or suggestion in either Moody et al. or Office 97 that there

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is any maintenance of any information regarding any sequential nature of such separately created documents and branching of the same.

In addition, there is no discussion of suggestion in either Moody et al. or Office 97 that the relevance information includes an email exchange history of branching of separate distinct emails that are either branching from a same email and time-wise non-sequential on a same branch, and/or two time-wise sequential emails on separate branches of same email.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that neither Moody et al. nor Office 97 disclose or suggest the presently claimed invention, as at least set forth by the independent claims. In addition, it is respectfully submitted that it would not have been obvious to modify Moody et al. and/or Office 97 to disclose the same.

Therefore, for at least the above, it is respectfully requested that this rejection of claims 1-8, 10-18, 20-27, 29-37, 39-46, and 48-56 be withdrawn and claims 1-8, 10-18, 20-27, 29-37, 39-46, and 48-56 be allowed.

CONCLUSION

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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